

Connecticut Weekly AGRICULTURAL REPORT

Dannel P. Malloy, Governor
Steven K. Reviczky, Commissioner
Steve Jensen, Editor



Connecticut Department of Agriculture
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MORE FARMERS GETTING EQUIPPED TO ACCEPT STATE, FEDERAL FOOD-BENEFIT PAYMENTS AT FARMERS' MARKETS

By Steve Jensen, Office of Commissioner Steven K. Reviczky

Nearly \$700 million of federal food-purchasing SNAP benefits was spent last year in Connecticut alone.

But only a tiny fraction of that – about \$145,000 – went into the pockets of producers who sell at farmers' markets.

Another \$862,000 was spent at farmers' markets through a state program that supplies vouchers to lower-income mothers and seniors.

How farmers can access these pools of potential income was the purpose of two meetings held over the last week in Haddam and Derby that were designed to help farmers get authorized to accept payments from both programs.

"These programs are great ways for farmers to grow their business, for farmers' markets to increase their customer base, and for low-income households to be able to buy fresh, healthy Connecticut Grown products," state agriculture Commissioner Steven K. Reviczky said.

The SNAP, or Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, allows clients to purchase items at farmers' markets with their Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card.

Farmers attending the meetings in Haddam last Tuesday and today in Derby learned how they can get a mobile device, a card reader and other equipment and software through a federal USDA program that picks up part of the cost.

The \$8 million program enables a farmer to get an iPhone5 or an iPad Mini equipped with a card reader and a software app that facilitates EBT transactions, as well as regular credit and debit cards.

The cost is \$340 for 3-year contract through a non-profit company called MarketLink that is running the program. Details of the program were explained by Don Wambles, an Alabama farmer and Director of that state's Farmers' Market Authority who is working with MarketLink.

Wambles told the group of about 35 farmers in Haddam last week that only 27% of all sales across the country are made with cash.

So his most important message was delivered in a single word.

"Plastic," he said emphatically. "If you can't accept plastic, where does that leave you? We've had a lot of farmers tell us they increased their sales by thirty to forty percent through this program."

There is a transaction fee of 15-cents for each SNAP sale. Regular credit and debit card transactions carry the same



Farmers Ron Haider, of Franklin, (L) and Darren Cugno, of Colchester, get materials and equipment from the Dept. of Agriculture's Rick Macsuga that will allow them to accept state food-benefit payments at farmers' markets.

fee, plus a 1.79% surcharge.

Beside the mobile device, those who sign up are given access to the Mobile Market app that processes the transactions, as well as a receipt printer, an online-pay account and other services. Those who want to use their own mobile device can get a similar package for no charge.

"We're trying to sign up as many farms or direct farmers' markets as possible," said Kevin Sawyer of the USDA Food & Nutrition Service in Boston.

On the state level, the SNAP program is administered by the Dept. of Social Services (DSS).

DSS's Bill Seedman told the producers in Haddam that all 900 DSS counselors are trained to inform clients about the program, which is also promoted in the 12 DSS offices across the state through posters and a video that plays in the

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PA LIVESTOCK SUMMARY

Avg. Dressing

SLAUGHTER COWS:

breakers 75-80% lean	102.50	107.25
boners 80-85% lean	100.00	105.25
lean 85-90% lean	96.25	101.50

CALVES graded bull

No 1 95-120lbs	475.75	526.25
No 1 80-90lbs	474.00	535.00
No 2 95-120lbs	435.25	486.75
No 2 80-90lbs	479.00	511.00
No 3 80-120lbs	323.00	369.00

SLAUGHTER STEERS

HiCh/Prm2-3	160.50	164.50
Ch1-3	158.00	160.75
Sel1-2	151.00	155.00

SLAUGHTER HOLSTEINS

HiCh/Prm2-3	146.00	149.75
Ch2-3	138.75	143.00
Sel1-2	135.50	139.25

SLAUGHTER HEIFERS

HiCh/Prm2-3	159.50	162.00
Ch1-3	151.50	155.00
Sel1-2	149.50	151.50

VEALERS Utility 60-120lb**SLAUGHTER LAMBS: Non-Traditional Markets:**

ch/pr 2-3		
40-60 lbs	282.00	335.00
60-70 lbs	260.00	280.00
80-90 lbs	227.00	232.00
90-130 lbs	222.00	230.00

SLAUGHTER EWES: 2-3

120-160 lbs Good	120.00	120.00
160-200 lbs Good	112.00	124.00

BUCKS

120-160 lbs	60.00	145.00
160-200 lbs	87.00	90.00

SLAUGHTER GOATS: Sel.1, by head, est.

20-40 lbs	80.00	110.00
40-60 lbs	125.00	170.00
60-80 lbs	180.00	225.00
Nannies/Does: 80-130 lbs	180.00	260.00
Bucks/Billies: 80-100 lbs	225.00	290.00
100-150 lbs	300.00	375.00

**USDA DAIRY PRICES
NORTHEAST**

BUTTER, 1LB	1.89	3.50
CHEESE, NATURAL, 8OZ	1.66	2.50
COTTAGE CHEESE, 16OZ	1.99	2.69
CREAM CHEESE, 8OZ	.99	2.39
ICE CREAM, 48-64OZ	1.99	3.99
MILK, ALL, HALF GAL	1.89	1.89
MILK, ALL, GAL	2.99	3.99
SOUR CREAM, 16OZ	1.49	2.49
YOGURT, GREEK, 4-6OZ	.88	1.25
YOGURT, GREEK 32 OZ	3.99	4.99
YOGURT, 4-6OZ	.45	.66

WHOLESALE FRUITS & VEGETABLES**NEW ENGLAND GROWN****Boston Terminal and Wholesale Grower Prices**

	LOW	HIGH
ALFALFA SPROUTS, 5LB	14.00	14.00
APPLE, MACS, 120, US#1	17.00	18.00
APPLE, MACS, 12-3LB USFCY	18.00	18.00
BEAN SPROUTS, 10LB	6.00	7.00
CIDER, APPLE 4-1 GAL	24.00	24.00
PARSNIPS, 25LB	24.00	30.00
SQUASH, BTTRNT, 1-1/9 BU	12.00	14.00
TOMATOES, 25LB, GRHSE, VR	20.00	22.00
TOMS, CHERRY, GHS, 5LB	14.00	15.00

SHIPPED IN

APPLE, RED DEL, NY, 88, XFCY	22.00	22.00
APPLE, BRAEBURN, NY, 80, XFCY	20.00	20.00
ASPARAGUS, CA, JBO, 11LB	32.00	35.00
BEANS, GREEN, FL, BU, MCHPK	16.00	18.00
BEETS, RED, TX, 12	14.00	18.00
BLUEBERRIES, FL, 12-6OZ	38.00	38.00
CARROTS, CA, 16/3LB	20.00	22.00
CORN, BICOLOR, FL, 4DZ	16.00	18.00
CUKES, FL, 1-1/9 BU	20.00	24.00
KALE, GA, 12/CTN	14.00	15.00
LETTUCE, MESCULIN, CA, 3LB	6.00	6.50
ORANGES, CARACARA, CA, 56	20.00	21.00
PEAR, D'ANJOU, OR, US#1, 120	34.00	34.00
PEPPERS, GRN, FL, LG, 1-1/9BU	11.00	14.00
RASPBERRIES, CA 6-12OZ	7.00	8.00
SWEET POTATOES, LA, 40LB	14.00	18.00
SWISS CHARD, TX, 12/CTN	16.00	18.00

HAY**LANCASTER, PA/PRICE PER TON**

	PREMIUM	GOOD
ALFALFA	250.00-325.00	205.00-250.00
MIXED HAY	250.00-390.00	190.00-250.00
TIMOTHY	250.00-325.00	190.00-230.00
STRAW	100.00-240.00	

**USDA WEEKLY RETAIL BEEF
NORTHEAST/PER LB**

RIB ROAST, B/IN	8.99	14.99
RIBEYE STEAK, B/IN	8.99	9.99
RIB EYE ROAST, BNLS	8.49	10.49
T-BONE STEAK	6.77	7.99
PORTERHOUSE STEAK	6.77	7.99
FILET MIGNON	14.99	14.99
NY STRIP STEAK, BNLS	6.98	12.49
SIRLOIN ROAST	4.99	4.99
SIRLOIN ROAST, BNLS	5.99	5.99
BOTTOM ROUND ROAST	4.99	4.99
TOP ROUND STEAK	4.69	5.29
LONDON BROIL	3.88	6.99
BRISKET, FLAT	6.99	6.99
CUBE STEAKS	4.97	5.49
STEW MEAT	4.97	6.49
GROUND BEEF, 80-89%	5.29	6.99

MIDDLESEX LIVESTOCK AUCTION

Middlefield, CT., March 30, 2015

Bob Calves:	LOW	HIGH
45-60 lbs.	50.00	60.00
61-75 lbs.	75.00	80.00
76-90 lbs.	330.00	335.00
91-105 lbs.	340.00	350.00
106 lbs. & up	370.00	380.00
Farm Calves	400.00	420.00
Starter Calves	45.00	55.00
Veal Calves	150.00	190.00
Open Heifers	185.00	215.00
Beef Heifers	108.00	130.00
Feeder Steers	145.00	165.00
Beef Steers	134.00	137.00
Stock Bulls	100.00	170.00
Beef Bulls	133.00	141.00
Replacement Cows	n/a	n/a
Replacement Heifers	n/a	n/a
Boars	n/a	n/a
Sows	n/a	n/a
Butcher Hogs	n/a	n/a
Feeder Pigs	n/a	n/a
Sheep	85.00	150.00
Lambs	80.00	210.00
Goats each	120.00	320.00
Kid Goats	25.00	180.00
Canners	up to	109.00
Cutters	110.00	115.00
Utility Grade Cows	116.00	120.00
Rabbits each	7.00	25.00
Chickens each	5.00	70.00
Ducks each	11.00	35.00

NORTHEAST EGG PRICES USDAPer doz. Grade A and Grade A white
in cartons to retailers (volume buyers)

XTRA LARGE	1.72	1.91
LARGE	1.70	1.84
MEDIUM	1.23	1.36

NEW ENGLAND SHELL EGGSPer doz. Grade A brown in
carton delivered store door. (Range)

XTRA LARGE	2.07	2.17
LARGE	2.03	2.13
MEDIUM	1.52	1.62

**NEW HOLLAND, PA.
HOG AUCTION**

Prices quoted by hundred wt.

48-52	200-300 lbs	39.00	44.00
	300-350 lbs	34.00	41.00
52-56	200-250 lbs	44.00	49.00
Sows, US1-3	350-500 lbs	31.00	38.00

PA FEEDER PIG SUMMARY

US # 1-2	30-40 lb	195.00	240.00
	40-50 lb	200.00	210.00

FOR SALE

1-R. Blumenthal & Donahue is now Connecticut's first independent NATIONWIDE Agri-Business Insurance Agency. Christmas tree growers, beekeepers, sheep breeders, organic farmers and all others, call us for all your insurance needs. 800-554-8049 or www.bludon.com.

2-R. Farm, homeowner and commercial insurance—we do it all. Call Blumenthal & Donahue 800-554-8049 or www.bludon.com.

3-R. Gallagher electric fencing for farms, horses, deer control, gardens, & beehives. Sonpal's Power Fence 860-491-2290.

4-R. Packaging for egg sales. New egg cartons, flats, egg cases, 30 doz and 15 doz. Polinsky Farm 860-376-2227.

5-R. Nationwide Agribusiness Insurance Program, endorsed by the CT Farm Bureau, save up to 23% on your farm insurance and get better protection. References available from satisfied farmers. Call Marci today at 203-444-6553.

8-R. CT non-GMO grain and corn. Hay and straw. Pleasant View Farms. Louis. 860-803-0675.

25-R. Hay for sale, from fertilized fields. \$5.00 per bale, 25 bale minimum. Large bales, no kickers. 203-453-9865.

26. Two row vegetable mechanical transplanter. \$350.00. Wide front end farm Farmall "C" with hubs. \$300.00. 203-265-6012.

MISCELLANEOUS

6-R. Farm/Land specializing in land, farms, and all types of Real Estate. Established Broker with a lifetime of agricultural experience and 40 years of finance. Representing both Buyers and Sellers. Call Clint Charter of Wallace-Tustin Realty (860) 644-5667.

CT FARM EMPLOYMENT CONNECTION

21-R. NYC Farmers' Market Salesperson and Van Driver – Excellent driver with strong personal skills to deliver and sell cheese at NYC farmers' markets. 18 hour day, 2 Saturdays/month, \$14/hour. www.catocornerfarm.com for info.

22-R. Van Delivery Driver – Deliver cheese to/from NYC farmers' markets. Two Saturdays/month.

Go to www.catocornerfarm.com for info.

WORKSHOP OFFERS ADVICE ON RESIDENTIAL PROCESSING OF FOOD FOR SALE

The University of Connecticut Extension is conducting a two session workshop to help farmers considering starting a small food processing business in their residential kitchen.

Connecticut regulations allow farmers, using produce from their farm, to manufacture jams, jellies, acidified foods and maple syrup in their kitchen.

The two sessions will address exploring the on-farm residential kitchen business option and product, process, and facility food safety controls during processing.

The course will be held April 15 and 16 from 9:00 am to 2:00 pm at the Middlesex County Extension Center, 1066 Saybrook Road, Haddam. Preregistration is required.

To register by April 6 or to answer questions you may have about the course, contact Diane Wright Hirsch, Extension Educator at diane.hirsch@uconn.edu or by phone at 203-407-3163.

MORE FARMERS GETTING EQUIPPED TO ACCEPT STATE, FEDERAL FOOD-BENEFIT PAYMENTS AT FARMERS' MARKETS

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waiting area.

The DSS website also has information and links to farmers' markets that accept SNAP.

"It's good for the farmers, it's good for the farmers' market and it's clearly good for the recipient," Seedman said. "Nutrition is a great way to save money down the road on health care costs if we can encourage healthy eating now."

Some markets offer to match the full amount spent by the SNAP customer, doubling their buying power and increasing the amount of product sold by growers.

"The markets that have the incentive seem to do better than those that don't," Seedman said.

Part of the challenge in signing up farmers for the program is the misconception that SNAP clients are concentrated only in urban areas.

"Every town in Connecticut has SNAP customers," Seedman said.

Rick Macsuga, a marketing representative with the state Dept. of Agriculture, handles programs that supply lower income mothers with children and seniors with vouchers that can be redeemed at farmers' markets.

Last year, he said, \$862,000 worth of the Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) vouchers were used at Connecticut farmers' markets. About half the funding is provided by the federal government, and the state supplies the other half.

"There is no state that even comes close to putting up that kind of money for a program like this," Macsuga told the Haddam group. "It's pretty amazing considering we are a relatively small agricultural state."

The state vouchers can be used to buy fruit, vegetables, fresh-cut herbs and honey.

Macsuga also handed out a list of farmers' markets that are looking for vendors for the upcoming season, which is also available on the department's website: CTGrown.gov.

One of the growers who signed up for the MarketLink package in Haddam was Gilbert Coriano of Meriden, who last year began growing vegetables like bok choy and herbs like cilantro in his 1-acre suburban backyard aimed at the Latino and Asian community in the area.

He believes being able to accept payments through both the federal and state programs will be key to expanding his business.

"Last year we sold everything we grew and this year we're going to triple it," he said. "This is going to help us a lot."

Those interested in signing up for MarketLink can get more information at marketlink.org or by calling 443-212-8084. Certification to accept the state FMNP vouchers can be arranged by contacting Macsuga at richard.macsuga@ct.gov or 860-713-2544



SPRING IS FINALLY HERE - LET'S GET PLANTING

The Department of Agriculture is promoting Connecticut's greenhouses and nurseries during the month of April.

The message on Pandora Radio, Total Traffic and Weather Network, La Bomba 97.1 FM radio, the agency Facebook page: www.facebook.com/ConnecticutGrown and at CTGrown.gov/plants reads as follows:

"Spring is FINALLY here - Let's get planting! Head to your local Connecticut greenhouses and nurseries for pansies, vegetables, shrubs and more. Visit CTGrown.gov/plants to find a location near you. Sponsored by Connecticut Department of Agriculture and USDA."

Also visit our Pinterest page, pinterest.com/GrowCTAg for greenhouses and nurseries open to the public, types of plants and landscaping design ideas.

The department is sponsoring a similar promotion of a different crop or agricultural sector each month throughout 2015.



Above: State Dept. of Social Services representative Bill Seedman (L) and the USDA's Kevin Sawyer explain to a group of farmers in Haddam how to get certified to accept state and federal food-purchasing benefits for sales of products at farmers' markets.

Advertising Rates: Fifteen or fewer words: \$3.75 per insertion. More than 15 words: 25 cents per word per insertion. Ads must be related to agriculture in Connecticut and are accepted on a first-come, first-served basis. Payment must be received by noon on Friday before publication the following Wednesday. Make check or money order payable to the Connecticut Dept. of Agriculture, and mail copy and remittance to the department at 165 Capitol Avenue, Hartford, CT 06106. For more information contact Jane.Slupecki@ct.gov or call 860-713-2588.

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CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE
www.CTGrown.gov 860-713-2500

Commissioner steven.reviczky@ct.gov	Steven K. Reviczky 860-713-2501
Marketing linda.piotrowicz@ct.gov	Linda Piotrowicz 860-713-2603
Regional Market linda.piotrowicz@ct.gov	Linda Piotrowicz 860-666-3699
Farmland Preservation cam.weimar@ct.gov	Cameron Weimar, Ph.D. 860-713-2511
Regulation & Inspection bruce.sherman@ct.gov	Dr. Bruce Sherman 860-713-2504
State Veterinarian mary.lis@ct.gov	Dr. Mary J. Lis 860-713-2505
Aquaculture david.carey@ct.gov	David Carey 203-874-2856
Agricultural Report Editor steve.jensen@ct.gov	Steve Jensen 860-713-2519